

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002848

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL AND NEA/PI; MUSCAT FOR PAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2013

TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV YM HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS MINISTER ON MINISTRY DEVELOPMENTS,
TRIP TO WASHINGTON AND OMAN, HRR

Classified By: DCM Alan G. Misenheimer for Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary and Comment: Pol/Econ Deputy met with Minister of Human Rights Amat al-Alim al-Suswa December 1 to discuss the ROYG's input for the 2003 Human Rights Report, her winning the fight to maintain ministry responsibilities for human rights through effective by-laws and her trip to Washington and Oman for programs aimed at increasing women's political participation. The Minister looks forward to meetings at the Department to discuss the Middle East Partnership Initiative and human rights in Yemen. Her description of the ROYG internal fight over the Ministry's by-laws illustrates in part the dynamics often at play in Yemeni politics. Her victory, along with by-laws that provide strong guidance and accountability, should bode well for the ROYG's efforts to improve the human rights situation and increase women's participation in political life. End Summary and Comment.

MINISTER THREATENS TO RESIGN UNLESS GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY
NEEDED TO DO THE JOB RIGHT

2. (C) Minister al-Suswa described a last-minute fight within the ROYG on issuing the Republican Decree outlining the regulatory by-laws on the Ministry of Human Rights (MHR) that she ultimately won. The by-laws abolish the previous structure of a Supreme Committee on Human Rights chaired by the Prime Minister, with Deputy Ministers from key ministries and with the Minister of State for Human Rights' role akin to a secretary general. Several ministries and some members of the Prime Minister's office were reluctant to relinquish the structure (Comment: presumably because of power and control issues, as well as the potential loss of government perks. End Comment). The Minister said she argued that maintaining both structures -- a (nominal) full Ministry and a Supreme Committee -- with similar mandates would undermine Yemen's ability to improve human rights because of competing interests and confusion over accountability. She said at one point she offered to resign should the new Ministry not receive the "responsibility needed to do the job right." Ultimately, the Minister prevailed and retained her ability, underwritten by specific by-laws issued by Republican Decree, to take charge of Yemen's human rights agenda.

MINISTRY BY-LAWS PROVIDE DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

3. (U) The by-laws outline the general functions and tasks of the MHR, the responsibilities of the Minister, Deputy Minister, Board and staff and its regulatory structure. The Ministry's primary functions include:

- proposing "policies, programs and procedures required for the enhancement of human rights and their protection in coordination with the bodies concerned;"

- studying legislation and laws to judge compatibility with international human rights conventions and treaties ratified by Yemen and proposing amendments as necessary;

- receiving complaints from citizens and organizations to "study them and treat them in accordance with jurisdictions of MHR in coordination with bodies concerned;"

- enhancing "fields of cooperation" with civil society organizations;

- contributing to the preparation of human rights studies;

- reporting on Yemen's international HR commitments; and

- coordinating with the human rights-related international organizations and developing cooperation with them.

4. (U) The regulatory/organizational structure is made up of the Minister, a Deputy Minister (Note: Not yet appointed. End note), a Board made up of the Minister, Deputy Minister, advisors and general directors, and seven General Directorates (complaints and reports, legal affairs, organizations and international reports, civil society organizations, awareness, studies, researches and translation, and financial and administrative affairs).

INPUT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT 2003

15. (U) Minister al-Suswa provided detailed responses -- coordinated with other relevant ROYG ministries -- to specific questions asked by Post for inclusion in the 2003 Human Rights Report, including case updates regarding the disappeared from the 1994 civil war and previous wars and other security-related cases. In addition, she detailed the re-cast ROYG initiative to improve prisoners' rights, including the release of those criminal prisoners (not/not terror-related suspects) who have served two-thirds of their sentence and behaved well, the increase in women security guards for women's prisons and recommendations for improving prison infrastructure to alleviate space problems that exacerbate human rights conditions.

MINISTER TO WASHINGTON AND MUSCAT -- INCREASING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

16. (U) The Minister left for Washington December 5 to take part in the National Democratic Institute's Win with Women: Strengthen Political Parties global women's forum on December 9-10. As the sole Yemeni representative, she said she coordinated with opposition parties (Islah and YSP) on their input but will represent the General People's Congress (GPC) primarily. She said she looks forward to meeting with DoS officials, including NEA/PI A/DAS Romanowski and representatives from DRL. On her way back from Washington, she is stopping in Muscat at the invitation of Vital Voices Global Partnership (VVGPP) to speak at an Embassy Muscat-sponsored conference on women's leadership in Oman.
HULL